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THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF TIFLIS (8TH-19TH CENTURIES)

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The history of the Muslim community of Tiflis (Tbilisi)¹ presents quite a valid interest. For centuries (especially during the 8th-early 12th) this community played a leading political and economic role in the life of the city. The Muslim natives of Tiflis had been renowned for their learning and creative work at many centres of the Islamic World.² The Muslim population was making its own contribution into the inimitable tincture of Tiflis taking part in many domains of the city life.

It is to be admitted that the history of the Muslim community of Tiflis has been highlighted in the respective sources rather unevenly. Having become a strong point on the northern borders of the Arab Caliphate, the city attracted close scrutiny by the Arab and Persian authors who regarded it as the frontier outpost of the Islamic World. That interest did not diminish after 1122, when Tiflis merged in the Georgian Kingdom to become its capital. Oriental historians used to provide vivid descriptions of special policies conducted by the Georgian kings with regard to the Muslim part of the population in the city of Tiflis. While focusing upon the religious differences, they casually touched upon the issue of the ethnic-confessional composition of the city's population. There is definitely a lack of the locally produced history of the city. As to the Georgian authors of the 8th-13th centuries, in particular, they regarded the Muslim community as an alien element countering the local Christian traditions. They present only some basic stages of the political history of Tiflis, highlighting in a very fragmentary manner the role of the Muslim clergy in individual events.

Fragmentary character of information is even more significant with regard to the history of Muslim community of Tiflis in the 16th-17th

¹ For general information on the city see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. Tiflis.

² G. Japaridze, "Muslimi moŷvaŷeebi at-Tiflis nisbit VIII-XIV saukuneebši", *Macne* (enisa da literaturis seria), N 4., 1989: 77-88; idem, "Muslimi moŷvaŷeebi at-Tiflis nisbit VIII-XIV saukuneebši", *Macne* (enisa da literaturis seria), N 1, 1990: 65-78.

centuries. The long and violent Turkish-Persian wars had left their imprint on the nature of evidence reported in the sources by Persian and Turkish authors. By reason of over-infatuation with the military and political events, the historians and travellers revert to an extensive use of military terminology and categories while describing the situation in the region. They refer oftentimes to the writings of the preceding centuries inadvertently creating the standard picture of an Oriental city. A typical example would be *Jihan-Numa* by Katib Chelebi compiled in 1655-1657. In this patchwork the data on Tiflis are mainly borrowed from the writings by the Arab and Persian geographers of the 10th-14th centuries.³

To recreate the entire ethno-confessional and social portrait of the population of Tiflis, its artefacts, morals and habitual practices of the individual urban groups, as well as links between diverse communities, the sources of the 18th-19th centuries are of invaluable help. However, they are affected by certain one-sidedness, as if they lack a vision from the inside. Thus, the statistical data disregard the ethnic affiliation of individual groups constituting the Muslim community of Tiflis. The documents available are not always sufficient to clarify the confessional division within this community.

The first Muslims must have appeared in Tiflis as far back as the second half of the 7th century, at the time of the Arab Conquests. At least, still in the year 654 Habib ibn Maslama took care of the future Muslim residents of the city by providing them with the "Writ of Protection". The townsmen converted to Islam used to become the co-religionists of the Arabs enjoying the rights (actually the privileges) upon a par with other Muslims.⁴ The most favourable conditions for spreading Islam emerged in the late 7th-early 8th centuries when nearly the entire Transcaucasia was firmly embedded into a large military-administrative unit, Armenia (Arminiyya).⁵ It can be assumed that the Tiflis Muslims were the Arab warriors of the local garrison. The city was governed by an Arab *Emir* who combined the functions of both military commander and supreme judge. His power was originally spread all over Eastern Georgia and even to the southwestern parts of the country. He managed the collection of taxes and was commander

³ G. Alasania, "Katib Čelebis *Žihan-numa* da misi cnobebi Sakartvelos šesaxeb", *Kartuli čqarotmcodneoba*, IV, Tbilisi, 1973: 69-71.

⁴ E. Sixarulidze, "Arabet-Sakartvelos urtiertobis ištioriidan", *Tbilisis saxelmčipo univesitetis šromebi*, vol. 73, Tbilisi, 1959: 170-172.

⁵ A. Ter-Gevondyan, *Armenia i Arabskij Xalifat*, Erevan, 1977: passim.

of the local military forces.⁶ Emir used to be appointed by the Caliph directly, sometimes by the ruler of Armenia. The former ruler, *Erismtavari* (prince) of Kartli, was subordinated to him.

The laws acting both in Tiflis and in the entire Caliphate, prohibited the change of faith to the Muslims, the proselytes were subjected to heavy punishments, including the penalty of death. In 786, for instance, such a fate overtook an Arab young man, Abo, native of Baghdad, who gained popularity under the name of Tbileli (of Tiflis). He had been brought to Tiflis by Nerses, the Ruler of Kartli; however, Abo could have adopted Christianity only in Khazaria, the centre of many Christian communities. When again visiting Tiflis, Abo was prosecuted for apostasy and sentenced to death.

By that time the Muslim community had been considerably enlarged and consolidated. It was not by accident that the Georgian author of "The Martyrdom of Abo Tbileli" chose to mention the Saracens as the second largest community among the entire city population.⁷ The Arabs had already established their own cultic institutions (mosques), the urban and social structures. It was by the mid-8th century that the pages of Oriental sources started to carry the names of eminent intellectual figures with the *nisba* at-Tiflisi.⁸ Clearly not all of them had been natives of the city; some had lived in Tiflis for a long time and acquired popularity. Tiflis was becoming an important centre of the Muslim culture as well as a military and political stronghold.

The political status of the city's Muslims was becoming steadily stronger. Since the time of being originally established in the 30's of the 8th century up to the early 9th century, the Tiflis Emirate did not experience whatever large-scale political disturbances. Emir's activities were confined to protecting the borders from invasions of the Khazars and forwarding the collected taxes to the Caliphate's Capital. However, with the Abbasides having lost their might, the links with the central authorities were gradually weakening, so that the Emirs were rather relying upon their own capabilities. They were countered by rulers of individual Georgian lands that had actually become independent by the late 8th-early 9th centuries. Having lost control over most of the country, Emir of Tiflis focused his attention at Georgia's central regions. The area of Tiflis Emirate was diminishing gradually.

⁶ *Sakartvelos istoriis narkvevebi*, vol. II, Tbilisi, 1973: 290-291.

⁷ K. Kekelidze, *Etyudi po istorii drevnegruzinskoi literatury*, vol. XII, Tbilisi, 1973: 125.

⁸ Japaridze, *opera cc.*

Lost in the 9th century was Shida (Internal) Kartli located to the north of Tiflis. Further on Emir's authority got limited to the territory of the city proper and Kvemo (Lower) Kartli bordering on Tiflis on the south.

Since the early 9th century, the Emirs of Tiflis kept trying to gain independence and to become hereditary rulers. The most popular of them was Ishaq bin Isma'il ibn Shuab who ruled the city and the area for nearly a quarter of a century. His persistent attempts to gain independence from Caliph terminated in a complete failure. By the order of Caliph he was captured and executed in 853, while the city of Tiflis was burned down. Established in the city since the 80's of the 9th centuries was the Arab dynasty of the Jafarides who ruled Tiflis for two centuries. They had gradually become independent rulers making the position of Emir hereditary.

Since the late 9th century, the Emirs of Tiflis had to struggle against the Armenian Bagratids ruling Samshvilde (Shamshulde) city with environs. The greatest success against the Tiflis rulers was achieved by the King of Tashir-Dzoraget, David, a representative of a lateral (junior) line of the Ani Bagratids. In the late 10th century he captured Dmanisi city subordinating the Emir of Tiflis to his authority.⁹

In the 30's to 40's of the 11th century, Bagrat IV, the King of Georgia (1027-1072), made several attempts to capture the city, however these attempts failed through different reasons.¹⁰

The Seljuk invasion strengthened the position of the Tiflis Emir. In 1068 Emir Jafar was not slow to present himself to Sultan Alp-Arslan (1063-1072) so as to recognise his authority.¹¹ The Sultan established control over Tiflis and erected a great mosque.¹² In the next year Bagrat IV captured the city but preferred to hand Tiflis down to Sitil, a descendant of the Jafarides.¹³

In the early 80's of the 11th century the authority of the Jafarides was terminated. For 40 years until 1122, Tiflis had been ruled by the "Tiflis Elders" or "City Elders" who enjoyed great influence and rights

⁹ Step'anos Taronec'i Asolik, *Patmut'iwn tiezerakan*, S. Peterburg, 1885: 256.

¹⁰ *Kartlis cxovreba*, vol. I, Tbilisi, 1955: 297-300.

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 309.

¹² Sadr ad-Din Ali al-Husayni, *Axbār at-daulat as-saljūqīyya* (*Soobščeniya o sel'džukskom gosudarstve*), Izdaniye teksta, perevod, vvedeniye Z. Bunyatova, Moscow, 1980: 55.

¹³ R. Kiknadze, "XI-XII saukuneta Tbilisis istoriidan", *Istorii institutis šromebi*, vol. 5, part I, Tbilisi, 1960: 115-117; see also V. Minorsky, "Caucasica in the History of Mayyāfāriqin", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. XII, part 4 (1948): 29.

within the city since the 40's of the 11th century at least.¹⁴ Some researchers interpret that as a form of the urban commune.¹⁵ The Arab authors Al-Fariqi (1116-1176) and Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (1186-1257) visualised the city governance in a slightly different way. According to Al-Fariqi, Tiflis was ruled by the "people", while Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī mentions "the youth" as the ruling social group. Perhaps, in 1082-1122, along with the city patriciate, taking part in the administration were also citizens from the low strata of the population.¹⁶

The year 1122 saw a providential occurrence in the life of Tiflis. The army of David IV the Restorer, the King of Georgia (1089-1125) captured the city annexing it to the re-united Georgian State. Thenceforth Tiflis regained the status of the Capital of Georgia. Municipal self-government was eliminated, and the control of the city was taken over by the king's officials. The changes in political life had a direct impact on the Muslim community of the city. The military-feudal gentility lost its supremacy in the community for good. The leadership was taken over by the merchants and craftsmen's guilds retaining their positions in the economic life of the city.

The city capture has been described by various authors, their testimonies differing only in details. Of particular interest are the minute data by Ibn al-Athīr depicting the actions of the Muslim leaders: "[The Georgians] besieged Tiflis engaging the insiders. The population was under severe pressure and intolerable conditions. The siege continued to 1122 when they captured it by force. The city population, being on the brink of death, sent their *Qadi* and *Khatib* to the Georgians to plead for peace, but the Georgians rejected their plea, dishonoured them and forcing their way into the city, looted and destroyed it".¹⁷ As attested by Matt'ēos Urhac'i, repressions were applied with regard to the military leadership: five hundred troop commanders (*srahang* in the original, Persian *sarhang*)¹⁸ were hanged.¹⁹ Having disposed of the military-political opposition, the Georgian King redefined his policies. According to Al-Fariqi, "After three days he granted *amān* to its people and soothed their hearts and left them alone, in all goodness. For that year he abrogated their taxes, services

¹⁴ *Kartlis cxovreba*, I: 299.

¹⁵ Sh. Meschia, *Saistorio giebi*, vol. I, Tbilisi, 1982: 217-278.

¹⁶ M. Gabashvili, *Sakartvelos kalakebi XI-XII saukuneebsi*, Tbilisi, 1981: 63-82.

¹⁷ *Ibn al-Athir*, T'argmanutyun bnagric', arajaban ew canot'agrut'yunner A. Ter-Levondyani, Erevan, 1981: 242.

¹⁸ H. Ačarian, *Hayeren armatakan bararan*, vol. IV, Erevan, 1979, s.v.

¹⁹ Matt'ēos Urhac'i, *Žamanakagrut'yun*, Erevan, 1991: 382.

(*al-mu'aan*), payments by instalments (*aqsāl*) and the *kharāj*. He guaranteed the Muslims everything they wished, according to the pact, which is valid, even to-day. In it [it is stipulated] that pigs should not be brought over to the Muslims side or to the town, and that they should not be slaughtered there or in the market. He struck *dirhams* for them, on one side of which stood the names of the sultan and the caliph, and on the other side stood the names of God and the Prophet, on him be peace, [whereas] the King's own name stood on a side of the *dirham*. It was cried in the town (*al-balad*) that [the king] permitted [to shed] the blood (*aḥdara damahu*) of him who harmed a Muslim. He granted to them the call to prayer, the prayers and the reading [of the Qur'ān] in public, and also guaranteed that on Fridays sermons and public prayers should be held, and prayers be said from the pulpit for the caliph and the sultan, and for none else. He also guaranteed that no Georgian or Armenian, or Jew should enter the baths of Isma'il in Tiflis. He assessed (*wazzafa khidmata*) a Georgian at rate of 5 dinars per annum, a Jew at 4 dinars, and a Muslim at 3 dinars. He was extremely kind to the Muslims; he honoured the scholars and Sufis by respecting their rank (?) and [granting them] what they do not enjoy even among the Muslims. I witnessed all these privileges (*shurūt*) when I entered Tiflis in the year 548/1153".²⁰

Neither was the special status of the Muslim community violated henceforth. As noted in the anonymous treatise of the 13th century in Persian: "It is nearly a hundred and ten years today that the city is ruled by the Georgians. Its dwellers are Muslims, monotheistic, fanatical in faith, hospitable people. [The city] has many mosques, giving good calls for the prayer".²¹ In a later insert to the work by Ibn Hauqal it is noted: "The Muslim ritual places have been retained as before: the great mosques are protected against whatever defilement, the King provides them with wax candles, lamps and whatever they need; in all mosques the *azan* is loudly proclaimed, and not anyone ever attempts to harm them".²²

The particular policies of the Georgian kings with regard to the Tiflis Muslims have also been rapturously described by other Oriental authors.²³ Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī made a note of an outstanding benevo-

²⁰ V. Minorsky, *op. cit.*: 33-34.

²¹ *Adjaib ad-dunia (Čudesna mira)*, Kritičeskij tekst, perevod s persidskogo, vvedenie, kommentarij i ukazateli L. P. Smirnovoj, Moscow, 1993: 192.

²² M. Polievktov, G. Natadze, *Starij Tiflis v izvestijax sovremennikov*, Tiflis, 1929: 2.

²³ G. Japaridze, *Sakartvelo da maxlobeli aymosavletis islamuri samqaro XII-XIII s-s pirvel mesamedži*, Tbilisi, 1995: 234-244.

lence by David the Restorer towards the Tiflis Muslims: “[The King] conquered the hearts of the city residents, and they made some requests to him. He awarded them certain privileges, which are still in force even today. They [assumed] that he [the King] would not have pigs slaughtered there [within the city], would have the names of Allah, His Messenger and Caliph coined upon the *dirhams* and *dinars*, would endorse the [Muslim] dwellers to observe *azan* and *khuṭba*, would not enter a bathhouse with the Muslims, or an infidel would not oppress a Muslim. All these [privileges] are valid even today. David used to attend mosque each Friday with his son Dimitri, to listen to *khuṭba* and the reading of Qur’an, and *khaṭibs* and *muezzins*, dealing out gold money to some. He ordered to build a caravanserai for visitors and dwellings for preachers, Sufis and poets, and established hospitality for them. And if they had wished to abandon Tiflis, he allowed and bestowed upon them large property. He [David] had more respect for the Muslims than the peers of Islam”.²⁴

With regard to the interests of Tiflis Muslim population, David the Restorer and his successors proceeded from a sober estimate of the situation. Tiflis Muslims had enjoyed a leading role in trade and craftsmanship, so that their exodus from Tiflis had never been planned by the Georgian kings. The Muslim clergy enjoyed special respect. As attested by Al-Fariqi, a contemporary: “And I saw how the king of the Abkhaz, Dimitri (1125-1156), in whose service I was, arrived in Tiflis and sojourned there some days. The same Friday he came to the cathedral mosque and sat on a platform (*dakka*) opposite the preacher and he remained at his place while the preacher preached and the people prayed and he listened to the *khuṭba*, all of it. Then he went out and granted for the mosque (*atlaqa bi-rasm al-jāmi‘*) 2000 gold dinars. And I saw the scholars, the preachers, and the noblemen seek attendance on him, and the Sufis offer prayers for him, and he gave them largesse and rewarded them, while he displayed unparalleled confidence in them. And I witnessed on his part such esteem towards the Muslims, as they would not enjoy even if they were in Baghdad”.²⁵ It should, however, be noted that both the Arab and Persian authors add some embellishment to the picture, so it is hard to imagine that the tax benefits should really have existed, and on a permanent basis for that matter.²⁶ By showing an ostensibly idyllic picture, it was as if they in-

²⁴ O. Ckitishvili, “Sibt ibn al-Ḥawzīs cnoba Davit aymašeneblis šešaxeb”, *Tbilisīs saxelmčipo universitetis šromebi*, vol. 118, Tbilisi, 1967: 204-205.

²⁵ Minorsky, *op. cit.*: 34.

²⁶ Š. Mesxia, *Didgorskaya bitva*, Tbilisi, 1974: 101-102.

tended to prod the Muslim rulers to follow the example of the Georgian kings.

Nonetheless, part of Tiflis Muslims was displeased with the changed situation. The rest of the Muslim community groups started to emigrate to the cities of Asia Minor, and to other parts of the Near and Middle East. Beside the tradesmen and craftsmen, Tiflis was abandoned by renowned scientists, lawyers, *Hadith* commentators, theologists, writers. Among those the famous Hubaish at-Tiflisi, who had authored works on medicine, astronomy and philology in Arabic and Persian. Since the mid-12th century, i.e. following the events of 1122, his activities were associated first with Baghdad, and later with Konya.²⁷

The sharply critical attitude of some Muslims to the new situation in the city became obvious during the momentous days when Tiflis was besieged by the army of Jalal ad-Din the Khorezmshah. In March 1226, the Muslims of Tiflis openly collaborated with Khorezmians. Despite the support of local Muslims, the army of Khorezmshah raised violence and looting against the Muslim part of population, although those who got the worst of it were the Tiflis Georgians, Armenians and Jews.²⁸ It can be assumed that these events had increased tension between the Christians and Muslims of the city resulting in Muslim emigration. All the more so that the leading role in Tiflis started to go over to the Georgian feudal gentility, the merchant and artisan circles, and the Orthodox clergy. In the second half of the 12th century, the situation of the Armenian community was also markedly strengthened.²⁹ Vasak and Kurd, the princes of the Armenian province Mahkanaberd occupied the post of Tiflis Mayor under kings Dimitri I (1125-1156) and Georgi III (1156-1184).³⁰ In the 13th century, particularly after the Mongol invasions, Tiflis became home to the top-level Armenian merchants. According to an anonymous Georgian chronicler, around 1259-1265, "a certain Shadin, Armenian-born, was awarded by the Mongols first Tiflis, and later the

²⁷ Abu-l-Fazl Hubaish Tiflisi, *Opisanie remesel*, perevod s persidskogo, vvedenie i kommentarij G. P. Mixalevič, Moscow, 1976.

²⁸ Kartlis cxovreba, vol. II, Tbilisi, 1959: 174-176; Šihab ad-Din Muhammad an-Nasavi, *Žizneopisanie sultana Jalal ad-Dina Mankburni*, Baku, 1973: 167-168; Ibn al-Athir, *op. cit.*: 324; Kirakos Ganjakec'i, *Patmut'wn Hayoc'*, Erevan, 1961: 226; Mik'ael Asori, *Žamanakagrut'wn*, Jerusalem, 1870: 530; C. Cahen, "‘Abdallaṭīf al Baghdādī et les Khwārizmiens", *Iran and Islam, in Memory of the Late Vladimir Minorsky*, Edinburgh, 1971: 159; H. Margarian, "Jalal ad-Dini depi Hayastan ev Vrastan katarac aršavank'neri patmut'yan šurj", *Patma-banasirakan handes*, N 4 (1981): 130-131.

²⁹ Gabashvili, *op. cit.*: 96.

³⁰ H. Margarian, "Mahkanaberdč'ineri (Saduncanneri) išanakan tunə XII-XIV darerum", *Haykazean Hayagitakan handēs*, Beirut, 1998:19-20.

Kingdom itself'.³¹ This "certain Shadin" can be identified with Shnorhavor, a merchant known from the Armenian sources, who had vast connections with the influential circles of the Mongolian nobility.³² Thus, before long, the Muslim merchants and artisans encountered strong competition from the local population, gradually ceding their positions.

Similar phenomena could also be observed in the system of city governance. In a period of political hegemony by the Muslim community its life was noticeably influenced by the Oriental (Muslim) religious and municipal institutions. The city ruler was called Emir. In the initial period of the Arab rule he was an official authorised by nomination. After a while Emir obtained certain rights of ownership over the city, while continuing to govern it. Thus, up to the point of Tiflis becoming the Capital of Georgia, Emir of Tiflis was regarded as Person Number One of the Emirate. The city ruler was called Emir also in other cities making up the Tiflis Emirate. The Emirs of Dmanisi were related to the Emirs of Tiflis through kin or politics. The office of an Emir was also common in the cities of Armenia, having passed a similar evolution. Following the loss of political power and the rights of feudal ownership of land, the Arab Emir was transformed into an executive municipal administrator. The Armenian cities Ani and Kars had their own Emirs as well. While the rulers of large cities in Georgia and Armenia carried the title of Emir, the city chief of Tiflis, the Capital, was often titled "Emir of Emirs" (*Amirta amira* in Georgian, or *amirapet* in Armenian—"Head of Emirs"). During the reign of Queen Tamar (1184-1207) the Emir of Emirs was at the same time the ruler of Kartli.

A conspicuous part in the city administration used to be performed by Shurta—the police chief. Beside Tiflis, other cities of the Tiflis Emirate had their own Shurta, their activities being extended all over the city area. The position of Shurta remained in the administration of the Georgian Kings until 1122,³³ while by the Orbelians, the rulers of the Armenian region of Syunik it remained to the late 13th century.³⁴ In the Georgian and Armenian environment, under political leadership of Christian rulers, the office of the chief of Shurta had under-

³¹ *Kartlis cxovreba*, II: 255.

³² A. Margarian, "K voprosu o lichnosti i deyatelnosti nekoego Šadina", *Kavkaz i Vizantiya*, vol. 3, Erevan, 1982: 64-72.

³³ *Kartuli samartlis zeglebi*, vol. II, Tbilisi, 1965: 10; *Kartlis cxovreba*, I: 268.

³⁴ S. Avagyan, *Vimakan arjanagrut'yunneri barak'nnut'yun*, Erevan, 1978: 255-258.

gone a transformation by becoming a police official of the provincial administration.

The political changes involved some influential members of the city aristocracy—"the Tiflis Elders, or Ra'iss". In the neighbouring Iran, the "City Ra'iss" played a similar, and rather conspicuous, role as well.³⁵ In the cities of Armenia this top level of the city population was indicated by the terms *glxavork' k'alak'in* and *avagk' k'atak'in*. They had the last word when resolving the issues crucial for the entire urban population.³⁶ It can be assumed that also among them were the representatives of the feudal aristocracy and the wealthiest merchants and pawnbrokers. From the decree by King Georgi III dated 1170 it becomes known that there was a special tax *saraiso*,³⁷ collected by the order of the king. Apparently, the Ra'iss obeyed the king's authority renouncing their former capabilities. The post of Ra'is existed only in Tiflis; it found no usage in other Georgian cities.³⁸ However, hardly any substantial changes took place in the status or functions of the city officials like the *Amid* (chief municipal office clerk) and *Mushrib* (a financial clerk in municipal administration) in Oriental urban centres.³⁹ The former position, attested in the same royal edict by Georgi III has thenceforth never been mentioned, being evidently replaced by a relevant Georgian institution. The position of *Mushrib* has been retained for a comparatively long time, to the 14th century at least.

Of a particular interest are the municipal office positions related to the religious life of Tiflis Muslims.⁴⁰ Of those, the colourful figure of the Muhtasib was distinguished amidst the city life by the variety of responsibilities and the extension of authority. The Muhtasib in the Medieval Islamic cities took a most active part in establishing the city trade, enacting the accurate weights and measures on the market and watching over the quality of craftsmanship. He controlled the fulfilment of Shariat and the Islamic norms of behaviour (ban on intoxicating drinks, gambling, etc.), took care of the urban construction, etc.

³⁵ G. Beradze, "K voprosu ob institute gorodskix raisov v Irane X-XII vv.", *Iran*, Moscow, 1971; V. Gabashvili, "Tbilisis mmartveloba X-XI saukuneebši", *Tbilisis saxelmçipo univesitetis šromebi*, vol. 108, Tbilisi, 1964: 357.

³⁶ B. Arak'elyan, *K'atak'nera ev arhestnera Hayastanum IX-XIII dd.*, Erevan, 1964: 152-173.

³⁷ *Kartuli samartliss geglebi*, II: 21.

³⁸ Gabashvili, *Sakartvelos kalaḡebi* ...: 87.

³⁹ M. Lortkipanidze, "Ḳalak'is moxeleta saḡitxisatvis peodalur Sakartveloši", *Masalebi Sakartvelosa da Ḳavkas'is istoriatvis*, Tbilisi, 1954: 147-155; Š. Mesxia, *Goroda i gorodskoj stroj feodal'noj Gruzii*, Tbilisi, 1959: 79-82; Gabashvili, "Tbilisis mmartveloba X-XI saukuneebši": 332-339.

⁴⁰ M. Gabašvili, "Musul'manskie religioznie dolinosti po gruzinskim istočnikam", *Tezisy dokladov i soobšeniĭ*, Moscow, 1982: 15-16.

The greatest prerogative of Muhtasib was to facilitate the Muslim privileges in cities with mixed population. It was his job to oversee the situation whereby the Christians or Jews should not build houses taller than the Muslim ones, or that the infidels should gather only at allocated places, that they wear only specially designed clothes, etc.⁴¹

Thus, the office of Muhtasib had an ostensibly Muslim bias, and at first glance it's functioning in Tiflis after 1122 looked strange. However, this institution was also functional in the cities of Armenia in the 9th-13th centuries, so that certain parallels enable the elucidation to be made of the Tiflis Muhtasib office following the year 1122. The Muhtasib of Ani was mentioned in an Armenian inscription of 1055/56,⁴² i.e., the office of Muhtasib was functional even in the Armenian cities having never been under the political domination of the Muslims. Therefore, it may be concluded that the Ani Muhtasib was not in possession of the functions related to the Muslim Religion. This type of conclusion is all the more probable if the genesis and evolution of the Muhtasib institution should be scrutinised in detail. The Arabs had taken over the position of *Agoranomos*—market overseer—from the Byzantians. This sphere of activities was later considerably widened, and already at the time of the early Abbasides the office of Muhtasib was established in its common sense.⁴³ However, even in the 11th century that position could be held by a non-Muslim, although that was quite rare.⁴⁴ The final islamisation of this institution occurred after the 11th century.⁴⁵ Thus, the Muhtasib of Tiflis had not differed from similar officials of the Islamic Orient prior to the transition of Tiflis under the authority of the Georgian kings. After 1122 the round of his responsibilities was considerably contracted, and the Muhtasib became an ordinary official in the service of the Georgian court.

The only official who retained the lion's share of his authority and influence was perhaps the Qadi of Tiflis. The person holding this post was appointed by the order of Caliph, Sultan, or another supreme ruler. At some periods of the city history, considering its enclave situa-

⁴¹ R. Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam*, Cambridge, 1962: 334-338; *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 5, Cambridge, 1968: 278-279; *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 2, Cambridge, 1970: 529.

⁴² *Divan hay vimagrut'yan*, hator I, Erevan, 1966: 38.

⁴³ *The Cambridge History of Islam*, *ibid.*: 496, 549, 557.

⁴⁴ See Xvāja Nizām al-mulk-i Tūsī, *Siyāsat-nāmah*, Tehran 1375/1997: Chapter 3/4 (Andar qadīyān, xāṭibān va muhtasab va raunaq-i kār-i ēšān); cf. also the Russian translation *Siaset-name, Kniga o pravlenii vezira XI stoletiya. Nizām al-Mul'ka*, perevod B. Zaxodera, Moscow-Leningrad, 1947: 171.

⁴⁵ H. Margarian, "Muht'asibut'yan institutə Hayastani k'alak'nerum XI-XIII dd.", *Patma-banasirakan handes*, N 1 (1985): 116.

tion, most probably, the Qadi used to be appointed by the Tiflis Emir, or else Caliph consulted him on the matter. Qadi had an enormous power and a wide range of responsibilities. He examined the civil and criminal affairs, performed the functions of the notary public, controlled the *waquf* property and the situation at city markets, squares, neighbourhoods, etc. Also under his observation was the standard of public morals, this function being correlated with the responsibilities of the Muhtasib. Obviously, with the complete subordination of the city authorities to the king and the domination of the Christian Church and the Georgian judiciary institutions, the Tiflis Qadi was relieved of a number of his responsibilities. Now then his authority covered purely Muslim quarters of Tiflis, but only while the Muslims had managed to retain their positions. Nonetheless, the Tiflis Qadi had the competence to bring a verdict on the most serious crimes. On one occasion in 1138/9 he sentenced an Isma'ilite to the penalty of death, which cost him his own life.⁴⁶ The authority of the Tiflis Qadi was so high that in the early 13th century he, along with the Qadis of Ani and Dvin, used to take part in litigations between the Christian monasteries.⁴⁷ As written by Marko Polo, by the late 13th century the Tiflis Muslims made up the minority of the urban population: "On that land there is a fine city named Tiflis, surrounded by suburbs and many fortresses. The residents, Armenians and Georgians, are Christians, also some Muslims and Jews, the latter being scarce".⁴⁸ Still, the status of the Tiflis Qadi remained invulnerable, he enjoyed universal respect. On this occasion there is interesting evidence cited by a Georgian chronicler. Taking part in the negotiations between Ilkhan Mahmud Ghazan (1295-1304) and the rebellious Georgian King David VIII was also the Tiflis Qadi, along with the Catholicos and a Georgian nobleman, Ivane Burseli. Their mission failed, and the Mongols did not take long to execute Ivane Burseli.

Meanwhile, they released both the Georgian Catholicos and the Tiflis Qadi.⁴⁹ The Qadi may yet have for a long time been regarded as the most influential person within the Muslim community of Tiflis.

Determination of the ethno-confessional composition of the "golden age" of the Tiflis Muslim community in the 8th-early 12th centuries is associated with considerable difficulties. Amidst the Tiflis

⁴⁶ T. Natroshvili, "Ismailiṭa mograobis istoriidan", *Macne* (Istoriis, arqeologiis, etnografiisa da xelovnebis istoriis seria), N 2 (1975): 69-70.

⁴⁷ Step'anos Orbelean, *Patmut'yun nahangin Sisakan*, Tiflis, 1910: 355.

⁴⁸ Apud: Polievktov, Natadze: 7.

⁴⁹ *Kartlis cxovreba*, II: 303.

Muslims, the Arabs must have been dominating for quite a long time. However, with the weakening links to the Arab Caliphate and strengthening relations with the adjacent countries, the ethnic uniformity was most likely gradually eroding. At the period of the so-called "Dailamite Interlude" (V. Minorsky's term) in the 10th-early 11th century, the ethnic Iranians were strengthened in Tiflis and other urban areas of Transcaucasia. An indirect indication of that is that some Georgian sources divide the history of Tiflis into two periods: before and after 1122, the former period being titled "the period of Persian domination".⁵⁰ The arrival of the Seljuks certainly consolidated the positions of the Turkic-speaking population. A later insert of the 12th century occurring in the work by Ibn Hauqal, reported about the Georgian Muslims.⁵¹ Being the native-born city residents, the Muslims dealing in commerce and craftsmanship, probably occupied the old right-bank part of Tiflis. The military nobility of the Muslim community was settled on the left bank, the fortified part of Isani.⁵²

It is hardly possible to discuss the confessional situation with more clarity. Ibn Hauqal, visiting Tiflis in the mid-10th century, noted that the local Muslims were Sunnites.⁵³ Among the natives of Tiflis there were also the Shi'ites representing both the orthodox and the extreme directions. Among the Sunnites, the followers of the Shafii *mazhab* prevailed. Moreover, the intercommunal ratio between the Sunnites and Shi'ites has not remained invariable during the centuries.

The last quarter of the 14th century to the initial four decades of the 16th century were the most unstable period in the history of Tiflis. By the autumn of 1386, the troops of Tamerlane captured the city subjecting it to terrible destruction. They led away Bagrat V, the Georgian King (1360-1393) into captivity, and Tamerlane demanded that he adopt Islam. Eventually the King agreed to become a Muslim, since that was his last recourse to acquire freedom. Meanwhile, both Bagrat V and his servants became Sunni Muslims of Hanafi *mazhab*. It is assumed that Tamerlane's choice was not accidental. This School of Law was in certain extent more matching to Christianity and, therefore, more convenient to be disseminated in Georgia, to replace the Christian Faith.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Gabashvili, *Sakartvelos kalakebi ...*: 86.

⁵¹ Polievktov, *Natadze*: 2.

⁵² *Kartlis cxovreba*, I: 300-301.

⁵³ E. Sikharulidze, "Ibn Hauqali Tbilisis šesaxeβ", *Sakartvelos istoriis aqmosavluri masalebi*, vol. I, Tbilisi, 1976: 36.

⁵⁴ *Sakartvelos istoriis narkvevebi*, vol. III, Tbilisi, 1979: 676-682.

In the year 1400 Tamerlane captured Tiflis again and stationed a garrison of the Khurasani warriors in the city fortress.⁵⁵ These actions could hardly strengthen the positions of the Tiflis Muslims, while the garrison consisting of Muslims soon abandoned the city.

The city was also looted in 1440, when it was captured by Jahan-Shah (1438-1467), the leader of the Karakoyunlu tribal confederation. The local population were heavily taxed so as to force them into Islam.⁵⁶

The periodic incursions by the aggressors inflicted irreparable injuries to the city keeping the population in fear. In 1477 the population abandoned city in advance of the invading troops of Akkoyunlu Uzun-Hasan (1453-1478), so that the aggressor captured the city without a battle.⁵⁷ Each invasion was accompanied by heavy destruction, depriving the city of a part of population. All through the 16th century the city was changing hands continually, its territory and population being cut down. More often than not falling victim to ruin and destruction were churches and various Christian centres.

In 1522 Shah Isma'il (1502-1524) set fire to Tiflis and built a mosque near the bridge,⁵⁸ connecting the right-bank part of the city with Isani. The mosque and the minaret withstood centuries, and by the late 19th century became the spiritual centre to the local Shi'ites.⁵⁹ By the 80's of the 16th century Tiflis became a small city with a tiny population.⁶⁰

Political and economic conditions were improved by the 30's of the 17th century, with the Turkish-Iranian wars ended and economic life being on the rise. The city again became a large commercial centre visited by numerous merchants from many countries.⁶¹ A compromise started a new period of relations between Georgia and the Safavid Iran. For an entire century Iran recognised the authority of the King of Kartli provided he would adopt the Muslim religion. The King of Kartli was regarded as a vassal to the Shah of Iran. The first Muslim king was Rostom (1632-1658) who had been born Muslim and brought up in Iran. To strengthen his authority, he stationed Persian garrisons in the cities of Gori and Surami. Stationed in Tiflis were Per-

⁵⁵ *Kartlis cxovreba*, II: 332.

⁵⁶ T'ovma Mecop'ec'i, *Patmut'wn Lank-T'amuray ew yajordac' iwroc'*, Paris, 1860: 120.

⁵⁷ *Sakartvelos istoriis narkvevebi*, vol. III: 742.

⁵⁸ Vakhushthi Batonishvili, *Aycera sameposa Sakartvelosa*, Tbilisi, 1973: 398-399.

⁵⁹ Dm. Bakradze, N. Berdzenov, *Tiflis v istoričeskom i etnografičeskom otnošeniyax*, SPb, 1870: 57.

⁶⁰ Š. Mesxia, *Goroda I gorodskoj stroje*: 92-93.

⁶¹ M. Tamarashvili, *Istorija katolikobisa kartvelta šoris*, Tbilisi, 1902: 225.

sian troops even before his nomination as King of Kartli.⁶² According to Vakhushti Bagrationi, Rostom had new mosques built during his reign. One was erected outside the fortress, another in the royal court, yet another at the city's Ganja Gate.⁶³ When building these mosques, King Rostom considered the needs of both the garrison and the local Muslims. By that time the Muslim population was solidly included into the privileged urban community. At the time of one conflict, according to a contemporary, "King and the Muslims sided with the Armenians", i. e. King Rostom supported the urban population (the Armenians and Muslims), which were countered by the feudal aristocracy.⁶⁴ By the way, the former mosque and praying tower built by Rostom were ruined in 1783 during the reign of Irakly II (1744-1798) following the acceptance of the Russian Imperial protection.⁶⁵

Evliya Chelebi, a Turkish traveller who visited Tiflis in the 40's of the 17th century noted that most Tiflis Muslims were Hanafi or Shafii Sunnites.⁶⁶ He also wrote that among the city population were many *ulemas*, though he made no mention of the mosques.

Amidst the large group of information on the ethno-confessional situation in Tiflis a particular place belongs to J. Chardin, a French traveller who had left a description of the city in the 70's of the 17th century. He pointed out the concentration of the Muslim population in the old city quarters. According to him, the river Kura "extended from the south to the north, with a large fortress on the south sheltering only the native Persians—the garrison and artisans". Nonetheless, if his words are to be believed, "Tiflis, despite being related to a Muslim state and governed by a Muslim prince" had no mosques at all. "The Persians, he says, had been trying very hard to build a mosque but could never carry the work to completion, since the whole population used to rise up in arms, destroying the work and disposing with the workers ruthlessly".⁶⁷ In the early 18th century J. P. Tournefort, also a Frenchman, witnessed another situation: "The population of Tiflis amounts to about 20,000 people: 14,000 Armenians, 3,000 Muslims, 2,000 Georgians and 500 Roman Catholics".⁶⁸ If these data are true and reflect the reality of the city life, then the Muslim com-

⁶² *Sakartvelos istoriis narkvevebi*, vol. IV, Tbilisi, 1973: 312-314.

⁶³ Batonishvili, *op. cit.*: 336.

⁶⁴ Š. Mesxia, *op. cit.*: 238.

⁶⁵ Bakradze, Berdzenov, *op. cit.*: 57.

⁶⁶ *Evliya Chelebi*, Targmanut'yun bnagric', aŕajaban ew canot'agrut'yunner A. Safrastyani, Erevan, 1967: 106.

⁶⁷ Apud: Polievktov, Natadze: 17-18.

⁶⁸ Apud: Polievktov, Natadze: 30.

munity amounted to 15 percent of the total Tiflis population. As described by him, the religious life of the Muslims was focused in two mosques located inside the fortress: the third one had by that time been abandoned. Yet, the limitations noted by J. Chardin, remained in force: “the *muezzins* would have never dared here to announce the hours of prayer from the high minarets on the fortress mosques: the people would have stoned them”.⁶⁹

The mentioned percentage of the population in Tiflis had not undergone any substantial variations during the 18th century. The total number of people in the city was taken to be 20,000 in 1745.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, over one half of this number were the Armenians, the other half was mainly comprised of the Georgians and the Tartars,⁷¹ i.e., the Muslims, independent of their confessional or ethnic affiliation. As to the number of their mosques, they remained invariable, three.

The political confrontation between Turkey and Iran was certainly reflected on the relations between the Tiflis Sunnites and Shi'ites. The Turkish sources do not conceal that when Tiflis was captured by the Turkish troupes in 1723, the local Iranian population was suppressed.⁷² The Turks also built three mosques, probably the Sunni ones, as seen from the further events. Thus, when Nadir Shah (1736-1747) ousted the Turkish troupes and entered Tiflis, he ordered to destroy the Turkish-built mosques.⁷³ Perhaps, at least one was later rehabilitated and was among those two to three mosques permanently noted by different authors. In 1807-8, according to M. Klaproth, there were two mosques in the city: one for the Shi'ites, the other for the Sunnites. The latter was destroyed in 1795 by the order of Agha-Muhammad Khan (1779-1797), with the minaret staying intact.⁷⁴ Several years before that mosque was regarded as inoperative, so that the 1803 description notes only one, perhaps a Shi'ite, mosque.⁷⁵

In the late 17th century the situation in Tiflis was sustainable, with a considerable growth of the population. Irakly II managed to join in 1762 the kingdoms of Kakheti and Kartli, to fortify Georgia's borders and to stabilise the security of the capital city. If in 1760-1770's the city housed ca. 24,000 people, in the next decade that number

⁶⁹ Apud: Polievktov, Natadze: 31.

⁷⁰ Polievktov, Natadze: 41.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*: 41, 49.

⁷² “Tarikhi Chelebi-Zade”, *T'urk'akan albyurnerā Hayastani, hayeri ev Andrkookasi myus žolovurdneri masin*, vol. I, Erevan, 1961: 135.

⁷³ Batonishvili, *op. cit.*: 336.

⁷⁴ Polievktov, Natadze: 69.

⁷⁵ *Sbornik svedenij o Kavkaze*, vol. VI, Tiflis, 1880: 302.

reached at least 30,000.⁷⁶ However, the political repositioning of Irakly II and his rapprochement with Russia led to tragic consequences for Eastern Georgia, and for Tiflis all the more so. In 1795 the city was captured and subjected to terrible destruction. The population sustained a disastrous damage its remnants finding refuge in the mountains; Tiflis was in ruins.

In the early 19th century, when Eastern Georgia was joined to the Russian Empire, the population quantity of the capital city was slowly rehabilitating. According to the Tiflis register as of January 1803, "residing in the city are people of different confessions up to 20,000".⁷⁷ With regard to the errors committed when doing the census, this figure is assumed to be slightly excessive, actually the city held 15,600 persons including the Russian military servicemen. Of those, the number of permanent city residents amounted to 13,700, the Muslims ("the Tartars")—300, i. e., 2 percent of the total Tiflis population.⁷⁸ Other calculations yield the number of "the Tartars, Caucasian Turks and Persians in 1803 as 200, however, the per cent ratio is retained as 1,9 percent of the total city population".⁷⁹ The same head count yields the number of the Tartars as grown to 300 making up 0,2 percent of the Tiflis population. Yet, these figures cannot attest the sustainability of life in the Muslim community of Tiflis. Thus, in 1825 the Tiflis Muslims counted 300 persons, most of them Shi'ites. Their number continued to grow. In 1829 Agha-Mir-Fet-Said, a Shi'ite public figure (Mujtahid), moved to Tiflis from Persia. He established the famous garden of Mujtahid in the city. By 1832 the number of the Shi'ites was 200. Their religious requirements were administered by a Shi'ite mosque. At roughly the same time, in the early 1830's, there were 187 "Tartars" in the city. The Sunnite residents of Tiflis, in those years had no mosque of their own. Most of them were migrant workers. In the subsequent decades the number of Muslims was constantly varying, with no significant influx.

The censuses of Tiflis in 1864 and 1865 enable us to form judgment on some regularity in the life of the city population, including the Muslims. During summer time the population was on the increase due to the migrant workers, including the Muslims coming from Iran and Turkey. Thus, in winter 1864 the city housed, except military servicemen, 60,085 people, including 954 "Tartars" and 529 Persians.

⁷⁶ *Sakartvelos istoriis narkvevebi*, vol. IV: 541.

⁷⁷ *Sbornik svedenij o Kavkaze*, ibid.: 302.

⁷⁸ Sh. Kakuria, *Tbilis mosaxleoba 1803-1970 წწ.*, Tbilisi, 1979: 8-17.

⁷⁹ Yu. Ančabadze, N. Volkova, *Starij Tbilisi. Gorod i gorozhane v XIX veke*, Moscow, 1990: 36.

Next summer the total number of the city dwellers was 71,051. Meanwhile, the number of Tartars increased slightly, reaching 1211, while the Persians became far more numerous, 7124 persons. The statistical figures inform us that in all the influx of people there were only 8 women.⁸⁰ The confessional composition of the Muslim community remains unclear, although the overwhelming majority of the Shi'ites is undeniable. While there are no difficulties in identifying the ethnic affiliation of the Iranian expatriates, the establishment of ethnic composition of the "Tartars" is not too easy. Qualified, as "Tartars" were all Turkic-speaking groups: the Caucasian Turks, the Tartars of Kazan, and the Turks. In the confessional domain we see a certain growth of Sunnites, they managed to organise their religious life in the city. In 1864 Tiflis had two functional mosques. The greater Shi'ite one was near the Maydan Bridge, while the minor Sunni mosque was near the Botanical Garden.⁸¹ According to the data of 1866, the total number of the Sunnites was then 109 persons in all, which clearly shows that there were few Sunnites among the Tiflis residents. It is to be noted that most Sunnites were Kazan Tartar expatriates.

In the late 19th century the Tiflis Muslims were mostly the Shi'ites. Ethnically they were either Persians or Caucasian Turks. The Shi'ites were also characterised by a relative ethnic uniformity, unlike the Sunnites. Among that confessional groups in the 60's of the 19th century most were the Kazan Tartars, expatriates of the Saratov and Penza *gubernias* of Russia.

In 1876 a new census was held in Tiflis, but though better organised, the precise count of each ethnic group had hardly been achieved. The count of 1876 yielded 2502 "Tartars" and 1692 Persians. Both groups were predominantly men: the "Tartars" counted 1748 men and 754 women, the Persians 1537 and 155 resp., which made the disbalance even more striking.⁸² Thus, the number of the Muslims still depended upon the seasonal migration of the population. The census data also explain the issue of numerical correlation between the followers of the two Islamic doctrines. Compared to the total number of the city population (104,024), the Shi'ites comprised 3,6 percent, the Sunnites 0,7 percent.⁸³ Of 4300 or the total number of Muslims, the Shi'ites were 3700, the Sunnites 0,7 thousand. The Tiflis Muslims had their own cemetery beyond the Botanical Garden. The Shi'ites and

⁸⁰ Kakuria, *ibid.*: 22.

⁸¹ Ančabadze, Volkova, *op. cit.*: 104.

⁸² Kakuria, *ibid.*: 29.

⁸³ Ančabadze, Volkova, *ibid.*: 45.

the Sunnites had their allotments on that cemetery. In 1877 the city authorities decided to close it, but still preferred to leave it there, since it was on a hill separated from the city.⁸⁴

Even more complicated is the determination of ethnic composition of the Muslim population. It is certain that of 3,7 thousand Shi'ites 1,7 thousand were Persian, the remaining 2 thousand being mainly the Caucasian Turks. The ethnic structure of the Sunnites was also uneven. It included 1000 Turks living in Tiflis in 1876, the few Sunnites coming from Dagestan and North Caucasus, as well as some "Tartars". The latter were present in both parts of the Muslim community. The greater part of the Sunnites was still composed of the Kazan Tartars who were permanent residents.⁸⁵

As shown by the census of 1897, having outlined in the late 19th century, the Muslim community's trends of development continued to deepen. The total number of permanent residents in Tiflis had by that time reached 159,590 including 74,000 Muslims. The total number of Muslims continued to grow, with the growing percentage with regard to the mass of urban population. Particularly noticeable was the numerical growth of the "Tartars" (3848) who already comprised 3,6 percent of the total city population. Meanwhile, the Persians (1485) being already far behind, comprised 0,9 percent of the city population. The age and number of this part of population was strongly dependent upon the seasonal displacements, which is apparent from the men-to-women correlation (1209 men out of 1485), men of employable age being certainly numerically predominant among the migrants.⁸⁶ The summer-time influx was so powerful that the number of Persians in 1899 reached over 6000 persons.⁸⁷ Since men were clearly overwhelming, part of them married the local Muslim women, to become permanent residents of Tiflis. The intensity of contacts with the former environment showed no sign of abatement, nonetheless rapture with ethnic traditions. Firstly, the new waves of migration continually replenished the ranks of permanent residents, the ethnic, cultural and living traditions being renewed and never forgotten. Secondly, the Persians, having turned into permanent residents of Tiflis, remained the subjects of the Shah. This situation invigorated them into the belief in their special situation, supported their ethnic self-awareness.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*: 105.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: 38, 46.

⁸⁶ Kakuria, *op. cit.*: 42.

⁸⁷ Ančabadze, Volkova, *op. cit.*: 38.

In the late 19th century living in Tiflis were also some Muslims from North Caucasus and Dagestan, including the Chechens, the Ingushes, the Kumiks, the “Lezgins”. The latter title lacked clarity and denoted sometimes all expatriates from Dagestan. The Caucasians comprised large numbers of migrant workers. Part of them used to subsequently remain in Tiflis. Thus, in 1886 living in the city were only 5 Chechens, probably craftsmen coming for earnings. In 1899 they already counted up to 400 and living in the city on a permanent basis. Still more migrants from North Caucasus and Dagestan were temporary inhabitants of Tiflis. In 1901 the number of migrants from Dagestan reached 2400. On the other hand the migrant Muslim workers were coming to the city for a prolonged residence establishing contacts with the local population, mostly with the Muslims.

Thus, throughout a millenium-plus period, the Muslim community has exerted a considerable influence upon the life of Tiflis. At times it managed to seize a leading role in the political or economic domains; the Muslim population of Tiflis was also distinguished for its cultural activities.⁸⁸ In the course of a long period of time, the ethnic composition of the community was variable, the same being true with regard to the numerical correlation among the various divisions of Islam. One feature remained invariable: the Muslims of Tiflis have always striven to make their own contribution to shaping the unique image of the Capital City of Georgia.

⁸⁸ See, e.g. Marina Alexidze, “Fazel-Khan Garrusi and Tbilisi”, *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol.7, 1-2 (2003): 125-133.

Illustrations

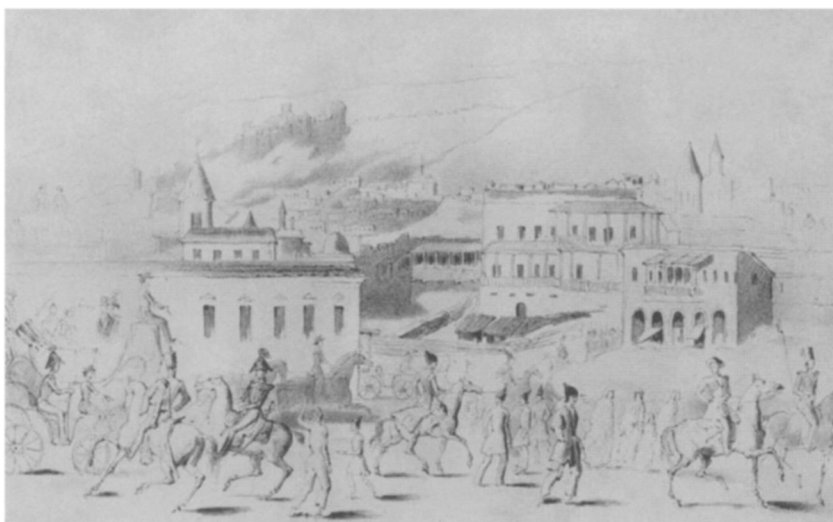


Figure 1. A general view of Tiflis
(Al. Saltykoff, *Voyage en Perse*, Paris, 1851)



Figure 2. Muslim Quarter of Tiflis in the 19th century
(V. Elibekyan, *Govk' hin T'bilisiin*, Erevan, 1979)

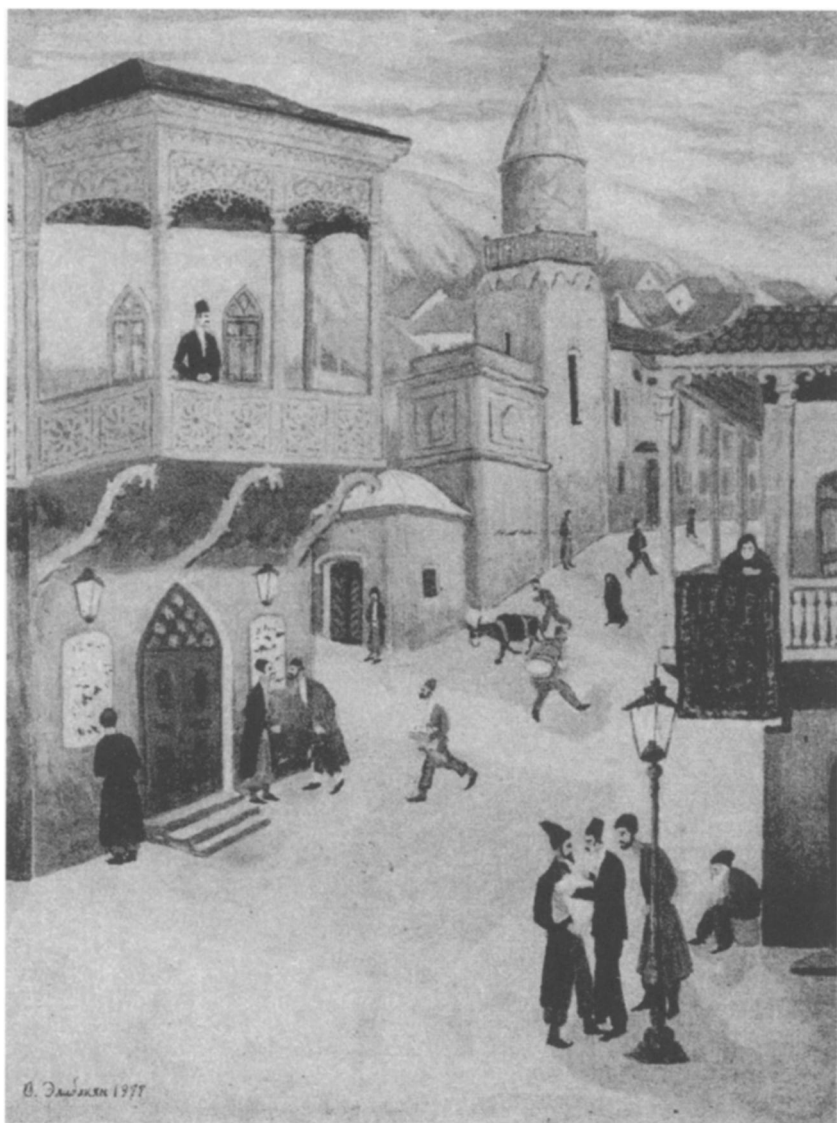


Figure 3. Muslim Quarter of Tiflis
(V. Elibekyan, *ibid.*)

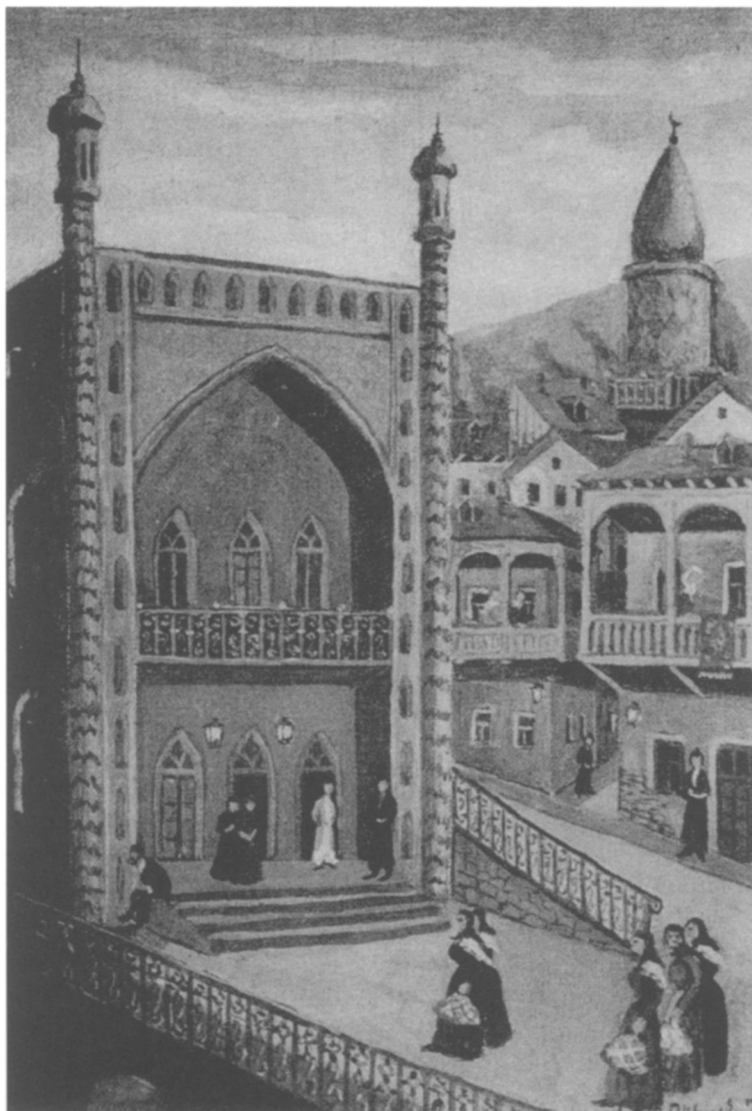


Figure 4. Muslim Quarter of Tiflis
(V. Elibekyan, *ibid.*)